



Policy and Research Committee of the Board

MA Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Updates- 12/2/13

QRIS Working Group

EEC held the first QRIS Working Group (via conference call) for providers and educators. Twelve members have been selected, eight participated on the call and discussed the proposed changes to the Environment rating Scale policy.

On November 20th, the QRIS Working Group for administrators continued discussions on the ERS. There has been positive response to the proposed changes.

QRIS Professional Development Requirements

EEC will convene a separate working group to review QRIS Professional Development requirements. An introductory webinar for individuals interested in participating in this work was held on 11/15/13. An on-line application has been posted for members of the EEC community who are interested in participating in this work. The focus of this work will be to; identify content area required, distinguish who needs required trainings (i.e. educator, "all staff," program administrator, etc.), establish how many CEU's are needed for each training requirement, determine the capacity to train participants, and identify a need for resources. Participants will be selected the week of 12/2/13.

NAEYC/QRIS Alignment Study

December Policy update

Massachusetts QRIS and NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation Project- On November 20, 2013, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) staff, Carol Nolan and Pam Roux, and NAEYC Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation staff, Susan Hedges and Stephanie Olmore, presented at the 2013 NAEYC Annual conference. The session, "*Massachusetts QRIS and NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation - Creating alignments for streamlined quality improvement*" included a review of the project's goals and the progress to date of this collaborative pilot program. The pilot program, has taken a look at aligning the Massachusetts QRIS system with NAEYC Accreditation by creating protocols for joint site visits, and identifying equivalent documentary evidence. NAEYC and EEC recently completed their joint visits to 20 Massachusetts Center-based or School-based licensed programs that were awaiting a first-time NAEYC accreditation visit or an NAEYC renewal visit and were enrolled in QRIS at Level 2, 3 or 4. NAEYC is currently analyzing the data and will be preparing a final report with recommendations to EEC by December 31, 2013.

QRIS Validation Study

Although the at-scale study was originally slated to begin in Fall 2013, the system is still in a relatively early stage of implementation and is not ready for the type of validation activity outlined in the original study plan. To support EEC in its ongoing efforts to bring new providers into the system, strengthen the system and its standards, and streamline its QRIS Program Manager (QPM) system, UMDI incorporated into its study a range of pre-validation formative research activities, to replace those previously described for the time period July 1 – December 31, 2013. During this time, UMDI also continued to prepare for an at-scale validation study to begin in Fall 2014, including finalizing a research framework to reflect key decisions made by EEC.

Pre-Validation Work Highlights

1. Focus Groups

The purpose of these focus groups was to quickly and efficiently gather preliminary feedback from early education and care providers about their experience with and perceptions of QRIS to (a) inform EEC's ongoing efforts to make the system more provider-friendly while maintaining their commitment to quality and (b) inform the development of a survey to collect information from providers on a statewide basis. Focus groups were conducted in-person at each of the five EEC regional offices and planned in collaboration with EEC. One focus group took place at the Donahue Institute's offices in Shrewsbury, and four individual phone interviews were conducted to help accommodate specific requests for flexibility in planned timelines. Input was gathered from providers in the following categories, including those both in and not in QRIS:

- Family and Center-based system representatives
- Directors of center-based programs
- Administrators from public pre-K
- Family care providers

In total, 16 focus groups were conducted with 61 individuals around the state. Please see table below for more detailed information.

Date	Location	# of Groups	# of Participants
10/2/2013	Taunton regional office	2	6
10/3/2013	Worcester regional office	2	17
10/10/2013	Lawrence regional office	3	7
10/18/2013	Springfield regional office	4	12
10/22/2013	Quincy regional office	4	13
11/6/13	UMDI Shrewsbury Office	1	2
Various	Phone interviews	N/A	4
Total		16	61

2. Statewide QRIS Provider Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather statewide feedback from directors of center-based programs, family care providers, and administrators of public pre-K programs, about their experience with and perceptions of QRIS. This aspect of the research will explore themes emerging from the focus group study in a more structured way and with a broader range of providers to determine the extent to which those themes are common in the field overall.

Nearly 1,200 early education and care programs has been selected at random to take the survey from among all programs currently participating in QRIS. The survey asks questions about their experiences with QRIS, including how they get information about the system, plans for participating in QRIS in the future, any additional support EEC could provide, overall opinions about QRIS, and any changes they would recommend be made. A mixed method survey

administration approach will be used to maximize response rates including a combination of web-based, paper, and phone surveys.

Drafts of survey instruments have been shared with members of the QRIS Working Group, EEC staff, and others. The Donahue Institute will incorporate their suggested edits/improvements into the final survey instrument which will go out no later than Monday December 9. By February 2014 the Donahue Institute will issue a technical report of survey results along with a management briefing highlighting key findings emerging from the survey.

3. Validation Study Redesign

The QRIS Validation Study Advisory Board met in October to share thoughts and ideas on various aspects of the emerging study redesign. As a result of the Board's feedback, the Donahue Institute has committed to changing the specific instruments to be used in the child assessment battery in order to ensure we include measures that are more commonly used in the field, and by other states engaged in similar work. As part of this work, the study has transitioned away from using Dr. Gary Resnick as the primary design and methods specialist. Moving forward, the Donahue Institute is planning to partner with Joanne Roberts and her colleagues at the Wellesley Centers for Women (WCW) for further development and implementation of the validation study.

On January 16 the Donahue Institute and WCW will share their latest study framework with the QRIS Validation Study Advisory Board. Soon after that we hope to present a final plan to Commissioner Weber and EEC Board members as appropriate.

QRIS Participation Data

Major accomplishments:

- October 2013: There was an increase of 12 programs participating in QRIS and an increase of 32 applications in October.
- 687 of the programs participating are nationally accredited: 32 COA, 117 NAFCC and 540 NAEYC.
- 6145 of those applications have been granted a QRIS Level. This is an increase of 65 granted applications in October.
 - Level 1: 4760
 - Level 2: 1380
 - Level 3 pending reliable rater: 25

Significant findings or events: Applications by Region

QRIS Program Type	Western	Central	Northeast	South East/Cape	Metro Boston
ASOST	129	116	218	217	159
Center	326	308	354	481	357
FCC	693	856	1505	528	911
Grand Total	1148	1280	2077	1226	1427

Note: In FY13, Metro (Region 4) was dissolved for Grantee purposes. Towns were reassigned to neighboring regions to align with licensing offices.